THE FIRST TELEGRAPH LINE. Its History - Morse's Struggles - The First Message

It was enacted by Congress on the 3rd of March, 1843, that the sum of \$30,000 be appropriated for testing the capacity and usefulness of the system of electro-magnetic telegraphs invented by Samuel F. B. Morse of New York for the use of the Government of the United States, by constructing a line of said electro-magnetic telegraphs, under the superintendence of Professor Morse, of such length and between such points as should fully test its practicability and utility, the same to be expended under the direction of the Secretary of the Treasury, upon the application of said Morse. The second section of the act authorizes the Secretary of the Treasury to pay from the \$30,000 what he may deem a fair compensation to Morse and others, for superintending the construction of the telegraph.

There were four patentees, Morse, O. J. Smith, Alfred Vail and George Vail. Professor Morse, in attempting to construct the line between Washington and Baltimore (for they were the cities to be connected), conceived the idea of building it underground, and accordingly, after the wire was made, which, by the way, was of cop-per, wrapped with fine thread and tarred so as to make as perfect an insulation as was known at that date, leaden pipe was selected and made to receive the wire underground. About \$11,000 of the \$30,000 was expended on this pipe before a test was made. The test, however, was a failure. A battery and instrument were placed at either end of the lead pipe, but there was no current, and it was soon ascertained that the current passed from the wire to the pipe, and from the pipe to the best known conductor-mother earth. Mr. George Wood, a clerk to the patentees, said afterward that for several days it was thought Professor Morse would lose his reason in consequence of this disappointment.

After a lengthy consultation F. O. J Smith, better known as "Fog" Smith, agreed to buy the leaden pipe for a small consideration, and it may be stated that but for a suggestion made by Smith (and he alone is entitled to the credit) that the wires should be put on poles, as they are now, years might have elapsed before the electro-magnetic telegraph would have been in opera- CORNER OF KING AND FORT STREETS, HONOLULE tion. Smith's suggestion was a success, much to the delight of Morse, who had in the meantime gone almost distracted, and things went on swimmingly. The line having been cometed between the two cities, the office at Washington was established in the north end of the capitol. Mr. Louis F. Banitzinger was the operator-the first writing or making the character then was with the wire as it came into the operating-room from Baltimore; or, to give a better idea, imagine one of the wires on the street swagging low that it could be cut in two. A good operator goods in transit to the other Islands. Also, Black can take either end of the wire in his Sand and White Sand in quantities to suit at lower right and left hand, and, by striking prices. them one with the other, send a message. This was about the way messages were then transmitted. When it was no longer a doubt that the telegraph was a success the office was removed to Seventh street, between E and F streets, G w. MACFARLANE & CO. over the then city post-office, where the east front of the general post-office now stands, and the line was opened to the general public William Linton and J. W. Lugenbeel learned the art of telegraphing in the early spring of 1846,

mind the telegraph in its infancy are the following: John W. Lugenbeel, William CASTLE & COOKE, Linton, Fred. Koons, James Towers, Llewellyn Washington and William Macfeely. There are two others not now residing in Washington whose names should be mentioned in connection with the early days of the telegraph—Messrs.

J. B and Lambert Tree. These gentlemen studied the art with the writer and were for several years his assistants. Lambert Tree was a quiet, sedate young man, so much so that the writer dubbed him "Judge," not dreaming at the time he would ever aspire to a Judgeship. He has, however, been three times selected Judge in Illinois, and now has the high honor of representing this country as Minister to Belgium.

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